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SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL TERRORISM,(U)
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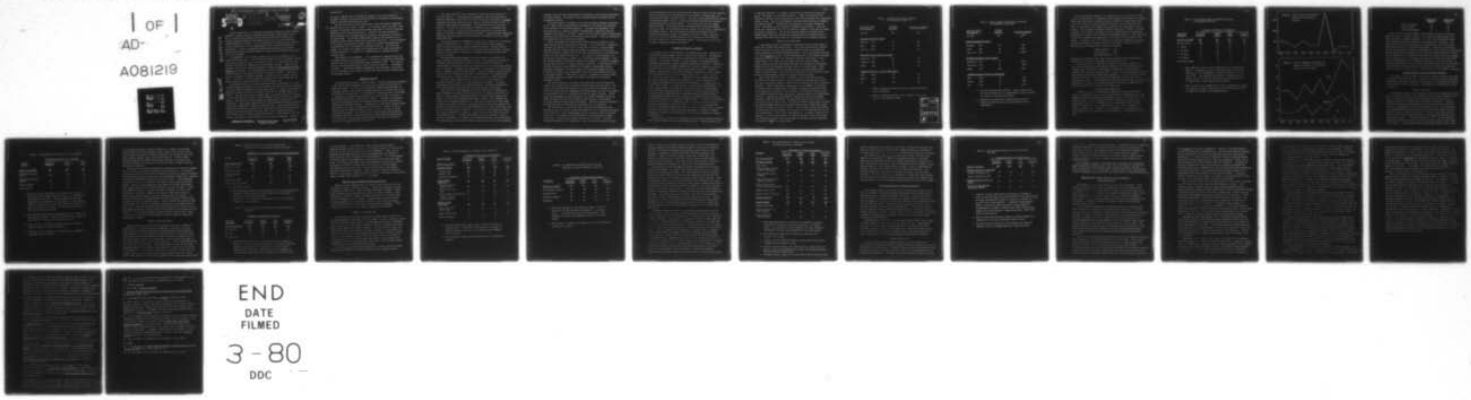

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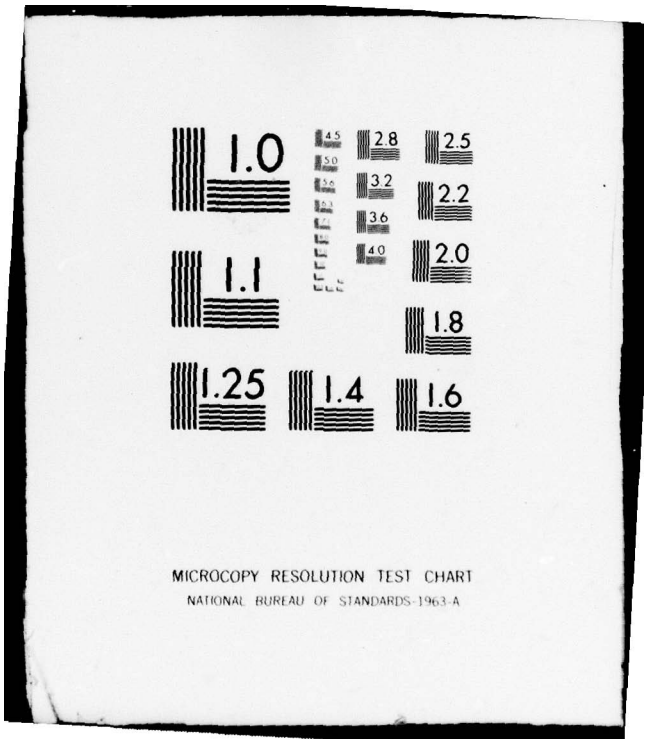
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(6) Some Characteristics of Contemporary Political Terrorism

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Political terrorism is a distinctive reolutionary strategy in which sustained campaigns of violent action are directed against highly visible public targets. It is a relatively new strategy, one that has been resorted to especially by alienated, youthful members of the middle classes, and it has been increasing rapidly throughout the world. It is a particularly threatening form of political violence, both because of its destructiveness and its potential revolutionary consequences. It has a pronounced international dimension as well, whereby revolutionary terrorists rely on substantial support from similarly-disposed groups and nations elsewhere.

The statements in the preceding paragraph are part of conventional wisdom about political terrorism. Most officials and ordinary people in Western societies would agree to them, and quite a few experts as well. So would most writers who have advocated political terrorism as a revolutionary strategy. Almost all the assertions can be found in Carlos Marighella's widely-read Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla, for example. The only difficulty with this catechism is that not one of its elements is supported by the weight of empirical evidence. Some of the assertions are true of specific movements; as generalizations, however, all are false. The irony is that this particular fantasy of the revolutionary left has been accepted as an ominous political reality by everyone else.

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The mythic proportions of political terrorism have a substructure of reality. Political bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations are real and frequent occurrences. We can plot their incidence over time and among countries, categorize their targets, identify the kinds of groups that perpetrate them and say something about their motives. But when this is done systematically, as the author has for 87 countries in the decade from 1961 to 1970, a rather different picture of "terrorist activity" emerges. The typical terrorist campaign was conducted by tiny groups and was short-lived. Their public motives were not notably different from those of groups using other unconventional methods of political action. More specifically, the perpetrators of terrorist activities were more often motivated by hostility toward particular policies and political figures than by revolutionary aspirations. Their actions were more often a social nuisance than a serious threat to life and property, more often a security problem than an imminent revolution. In fact

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one cannot identify even one unambigious instance in the last 15 years of a campaign of political terrorism which led directly or indirectly to revolutionary change of the kind championed by the left.

Not all the conclusions which follow from an empirical survey of political terrorism are as iconoclastic as these. It is evident, even in the 1960's, that campaigns of political terrorism were becoming more common in the more prosperous European and Latin American democracies. They also were more persistent in these countries, but less deadly than in the poorer, non-democratic countries of the Third World. The powerful authoritarian countries, the Communist ones in particular, have remained largely free of terrorist activities. In the conclusion to this paper some inferences are drawn about the structural characteristics of countries which seem most conducive to political terrorism. The first task, though, is to review some evidence and interpretations of trends and patterns in political terrorism on a global scale, relying mainly on the 1961-1970 data mentioned above.

This study has two limitations. It is restricted to terrorist actions and campaigns carried out by internal groups, so it does not include the international terrorist acts by various Palestinian groups that began in 1967. The second is that its empirical generalizations cannot be proven to apply to terrorism in the 1970's. They should be taken as hypotheses, ones which have a solid basis in the recent past, against which to evaluate more impressionistic evidence about the immediate present.

Definitions and Data

Intrinsically, terrorism is a state of mind. Political terrorism, presumably, is the state of mind of political actors who are paralyzed by the threat of unpredictable attack. No one has ever attempted to document systematically the existence of such a state of mind in beseiged officials or activists, few of whom would admit to it in any case. So by default the concept has come to be employed to characterize the kinds of actions which are assumed to induce "terrorism." The definitional problem of circularity is obvious. Those who feel threatened by political violence dramatize the imputed intentions of their assailants by labelling them political terroists. Governments are among those accused of using such tactics, as a means of controlling their subjects. Neither Idi Amin of Uganda nor the new rulers of Cambodia, both of whom rule by terror, would be flattered by the label. The tactics are more widely used by groups opposing governments, but they are much more likely to call themselves "revolutionaries" than "terrorists," and only some of them justify their choice of tactics by reference to an explicit theory of terrorism.[2]

This paper surveys the use of "terrorist" tactics by private groups for political purposes. The interpretative problems are sidestepped by using an empirical definition of this kind of "political terrorism" which makes no a priori assumptions about what effects the users hope to accomplish by their actions, or about how their would-be victims react. The definition has three objective elements. The first is that destructive violence is used, by stealth rather than in open combat. Explosives and incindiary devices are the archetypical weapons of political terrorism, but there are others, including sniping, kidnapping, hijacking, biological agents, and atomic devices, the latter two thus far feared rather than used.

The second element in the definition is that some, at least, of the principal targets are political ones. "Political" targets include public buildings, political figures and groups, and the military and police. Terroristic acts often are aimed at other targets as well, sometimes for dramatic effect, sometimes because of their political associations, sometimes simply because rebels have many axes to grind.

The third definitional element is that these actions be carried out by groups operating clandestinely and sporadically. This restriction is needed to distinguish the practitioners of terrorism from armed bands of rebels and revolutionaries, who operate more or less continously from areas which they control at least in part. In practice the distinction is not always easy to apply because rebels sometimes use both kinds of tactics. Generally, though, we have excluded from our data all instances of "terrorist" activity which, as in South Vietnam for example, was an intrinsic part of an ongoing movement of armed revolution.

All three elements must be present for an act or set of actions to be considered "political terrorism" in the context of this study.[3] The groups responsible for such actions are called "terrorists", but without assuming that they would describe their actions or aims in the language of terrorism.

Data on the world-wide incidence of political terrorism, as defined here, were collected by the author and his assistants for the decade of the 1960's, as part of a larger study in which information was systematically gathered on all instances of civil strife reported in major news sources. The procedures and sources have been described elsewhere.[4] Since "event counts" are in bad repute in studies of conflict behavior,[5] it should be emphasized that this study was not concerned with events per se, but with identifying the who, what, when, where, why, and how of manifest political conflict. For terrorism, for example, our efforts were aimed at isolating "campaigns" or waves of actions which could be ascribed to particular groups. For each such campaign, as for all instances of open conflict, information was recorded on the identity and motives of the participants, their numbers and organization, the targets and duration of action, the retaliatory

response if any, the number and identity of casualties, and the presence and nature of external support - all insofar as the information could be found in news and supplementary sources.

This study includes an analysis of the data on political terrorism identified in the larger study, beginning with an enumeration of the events and continuing with an analysis of their other properties. The reader must understand that these data are not a complete or wholly "representative" portrait of political terrorism in the decade of the 1960's because of the selective nature of journalistic reporting and the fact that not all countries were surveyed. These two limitations need explanation before the data are examined.

First, the information in journalistic sources gives most emphasis to the larger and more dramatic campaigns of terrorism. It is reasonable to assume that virtually all campaigns that lasted for more than six months, or that involved repeated attacks on national political targets, are represented in these data. Isolated instances of bombing and assassination, especially those in out-of-the-way places, are only "sampled" by the press. The reader is asked to assume, as we do, that these data provide a sketch - not a precisely accurate portrayal- of the more serious episodes of political terrorism in the 1960's. He should be reminded too that for the purpose of a global mapping of terrorism, or any common kind of conflict, there are no open alternatives to relying on journalistic accounts. Systematic information of this sort simply is not regularly compiled and made available to scholars by the governments of the world, by the United Nations, or by any private group.[6] Broad surveys are not an alternative to in-depth studies of particular terrorist campaigns and countries, but they are an essential complement to them.

The second limitation on the data is that they refer only to 87 political entities in a world that now has nearly twice that many autonomous states. The smallest and least-developed countries of Africa and Asia are excluded and so is China, not because they are "unimportant" but because news about them is so sparse, or so controlled, that it is unreliable even for our general purposes. The 87 countries nonetheless have some 90 percent of the world's population aside from China, including virtually all of Europe and both Americas, so the findings for those regions have some claim to generality. The 87 are listed in Appendix I; note that Hong Kong, Northern Ireland, and Puerto Rico are among them.

For the comparisons which follow the 87 countries are divided into more homogeneous sets, or clusters, so that the effects of level of economic development, type of political system, and geocultural region on characteristics of terrorism can be seen. The countries were divided into three "developmental" clusters on the basis of their economic productivity and social services. The three "political"clusters refer to conditions ca. 1975 and distinguish among the multi-

party democracies, autocracies (principally the Communist states, but also countries like Spain and Taiwan with tightly-controlled conservative dictatorships), and countries with "mixed" political systems. The last category might better be labeled "uninstitutionalized," since it consists of Third-world countries with untried or chronically-unstable political systems. The three regional sets are largely self-explanatory. The European cluster includes Eastern and Western European countries, Israel, and the English-speaking countries of North America, Australiasia, and Southern Africa. The two exceptions are Spain and Portugal, which for historical and cultural reasons are included in the Latin cluster, along with Puerto Rico and the independent countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. All other countries are in the Afro-Asian cluster. The clusters to which each country is assigned are shown in Appendix I.

Patterns of Terrorism, 1961-1970

The kinds of acts called terrorism are neither new nor rare. Medieval and French Revolutionary examples have been cited by Paul Wilkinson. The Righteous Assassins, a medieval Muslim group, systematically used murder for political purposes. The Jacobins developed a secular ideology of terrorism and used it to justify their policies against suspected counterrevolutionaries.[7] Walters has documented the use of systematic terrorism as a recurring technique of political control in some African kingdoms before the European conquest.[8] Terrorist bombings have been common in a number of European societies and in North America ever since high explosives became widely available, which is to say since the last part of the nineteenth century. They are so common, in fact, that many pass almost entirely without notice except by their targets and the police. For example, the London police reported that 139 bombings and attempts occurred in that city in 1974[9]. Many such actions have private not public motives. In Quebec, where political terrorists were active in the 1960's, police reported that 43 bombings occurred between 1972 and 1975, of which 40 were attributed to warfare between underworld factions and only three to political activity.[10] More detailed evidence comes from a survey by the Internal Revenue Service of the United States, covering 15 months in 1969 and 1970. A total of 4,330 bombings and incendiary attacks were identified, with the police being able to identify the group responsible in about 1,560 cases. Of this number, 56 percent were associated with student protest (not all of it political, by any means); 33 percent were attributed to racial extremists, black and white; 8 percent to criminal activities; 2 percent to labor disputes; and 1 percent to attacks on religious institutions.[11]

Our data for the 1960's for 87 countries are restricted to political terrorism, and we made no attempt to count specific terrorist acts. Instead we have tried

to identify "campaigns," i.e. series of terrorist acts carried out by the same group. The results are summarized in Table 1. There is evidence for 136 campaigns of multiple attacks that covered a wide area or extended for a substantial period, or both. We also have evidence on 199 more limited episodes of bombings and assassinations.[12] About 150 of these appeared to be single, unconnected events: one bombing or one successful or attempted assassination. Some such events were reported from 63 of the 87 countries; numbers of each type are listed by country in Appendix I. Not too much reliance ought to be placed on these numbers because many such isolated acts go unreported and others may be part of campaigns whose common source could not established from the evidence available.

- Tables 1 and 2 about here -

A more adequate index of the extent of political terrorism is the number of deaths that resulted from terrorist acts. It is clear from the data n Table 2 that the terrorist campaigns are relatively much more intensive and deadly in their consequences than the more limited episodes. But how serious was terrorism as a threat to life and limb? In the entire decade about 4,600 people--including terrorists as well as their victims--were reported to have lost their lives. If the latter stages of the Algerian war are added, the number exceeds 10,000. If Algeria and the four other most deadly campaigns are excluded (in the Camerouns, Guatemala, Cuba, and Venezuela), the death toll was well under 2,000. These figures can be compared with our estimate that one and three-quarter million people lost their lives in all civil strife in the 1960's,[13] or with the fact that nearly a thousand murders occur in the city of Chicago each year.

Much of the political impact of terrorism is due to the threat it poses, which looms far larger to officials than the objective harm done by terrorists. One way of assessing the degree of threat is to consider the duration of terrorist campaigns. In this jaded world a single day's wave of bombings is not likely to cause more than a passing ripple of anxiety; sustained campaigns like those of the Tupamaros in Uruguay or the Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland are much more likely to create the panic and paralysis sought by advocates of revolutionary terrorism. Information on the duration of terrorist episodes and campaigns is shown in Table 3, from which it is evident that three-quarters of them are come and gone in less than a week. The data are subject to some error, of course, but where the larger campaigns are concerned they are more reliable than either the counts of numbers of events or deaths. Such campaigns usually have dramatic beginnings that are well-recorded in the press, and can be dated from then to the last recorded bang. Table 3 shows only percentages; in numbers, there were 28 campaigns of 3 to 8 months duration, 14 which lasted about a year, and 10 which were considerably longer--though the evidence for sustained activity throughout the period is doubtful for many of them.

Table 1. Incidence of Political Terrorism in 87 Countries, 1961-1970

Group and number of Countries		Isolated episodes[a]	Terrorist campaigns[b]
All (87)		199	136
Countries grouped by region			
European	(30)	74	51
Latin	(22)	70	56
Afro-Asian	(35)	55	29
Countries grouped by type of regime			
Democratic	(35)	105	72
Autocratic	(19)	21	21
Mixed	(33)	73	43
Countries grouped by level of development			
High	(29)	68	56
Medium	(29)	82	50
Low	(29)	49	30

a. Single instances and short-lived waves of political bombings and assassinations.

b. Campaigns involving multiple actions extending over a wide area or a long period, or both.

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Table 2. Deaths Reported from Political Terrorism in 87 Countries, 1961-1970[a]

Group and number of Countries		Isolated episodes	Terrorist campaigns
All (87)		167	4,455[b]
Countries grouped by region			
European	(30)	26	245
Latin	(22)	48	2,580
Afro-Asian	(35)	92	1,630[b]
Countries grouped by type of regime			
Democratic	(35)	46	1,140
Autocratic	(19)	13	615[b]
Mixed	(33)	108	2,700
Countries grouped by level of development			
High	(29)	26	667
Medium	(29)	64	908[b]
Low	(29)	77	2,880

a. In the events tabulated in Table 1. Many of these figures are rough estimates and for approximately 5% of all instances no estimates of any kind can be made.

b. Excluding an estimated 6,000 deaths caused by the OAS terrorists during the last year of the Algerian war of independence.

The most interesting things to be learned from the data in Tables 1 through 3 concern the distribution of terrorist activity among different groups of countries. Unlike most other forms of political violence, terrorist campaigns and episodes in the 1960's were more common in European and Latin countries than Afro-Asian ones; in democratic states rather than autocratic or new Third-world political systems; and in the more prosperous rather than the poorer countries. The data on deaths are not entirely consistent with this pattern because casualties were relatively more numerous in the poorer and Third-world countries. This comparison is deceptive, though, because <u>all</u> forms of civil strife are more deadly in the latter countries. Here is a more accurate comparison, showing the proportion of recorded deaths from political conflict in the 1960's in each of the three regional groups of countries that were due to terrorism:

European countries	17%
Latin countries	12%
Afro-Asian countries	0.5%

Terrorism was responsible for a much larger proportion of much smaller numbers of deaths from conflict in the older countries than the new.

In relative if not absolute terms, terrorism was already in the 1960's a more serious problem in the more developed, European and Latin democracies than in other parts of the world. The duration of terrorist campaigns in these countries also appears to have been longer: Table 3 shows that the longer campaigns were heavily concentrated in the European countries. In fact, of the 84 campaigns that lasted more than a week, 44--more than half--were European and 25 of the remainder were Latin. When the democracies alone are examined (not shown in Table 3), they have no less than 52 of the 84 more durable campaigns, compared with 18 in the autocracies and 14 in the new Third-world states.

- Figures 1 and 2 about here -

A decade is too short a time-span to warrant much attention to "trends," but it is evident from Figures 1 and 2 that substantial changes did occur in the incidence of terrorism during the period under review. The number of reported deaths per year declined, except for 1967; all deaths in a campaign are attributed to the year of its inception, and a particularly deadly campaign began in Guatemala that year. The number of new episodes and campaigns was increasing while deaths decreased, as shown in Figure 2. The increase was most pronounced in the European and Latin countries, as these five-year totals show:

Table 3. The Estimated Duration of Terrorist Episodes and Campaigns, 1961-1970[a]

Approximate duration	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns			
	All (in 87 countries)	European (30)	Latin (22)	Afro-Asian (35)
Total no. of cases[b]	335	125	126	84
One day or less	67%	60%	68%	75%
2 - 6 days	8	5	12	7
1 - 10 weeks	10	14	10	4
3 - 8 months	8	14	5	6
9 - 18 months	4	5	3	5
More than 1½ years	3	3	2	4

a. From coded information on the episodes and campaigns tabulated in Table 1. The duration of each is the time elapsed from the first action which can be attributed to a group to the last, as of the end of 1970. Some guesswork was involved in ascertaining, first, whether a set of actions was attributable to one group or several and second, when a group ceased terrorist tactics.

b. Data on duration were ascertained for all 335 episodes and campaigns. It is likely that some of the episodes of brief duration were parts of longer-term campaigns by unidentified groups.

FIGURE 1. Deaths Reported from Political Terrorism in 87 Countries by Year

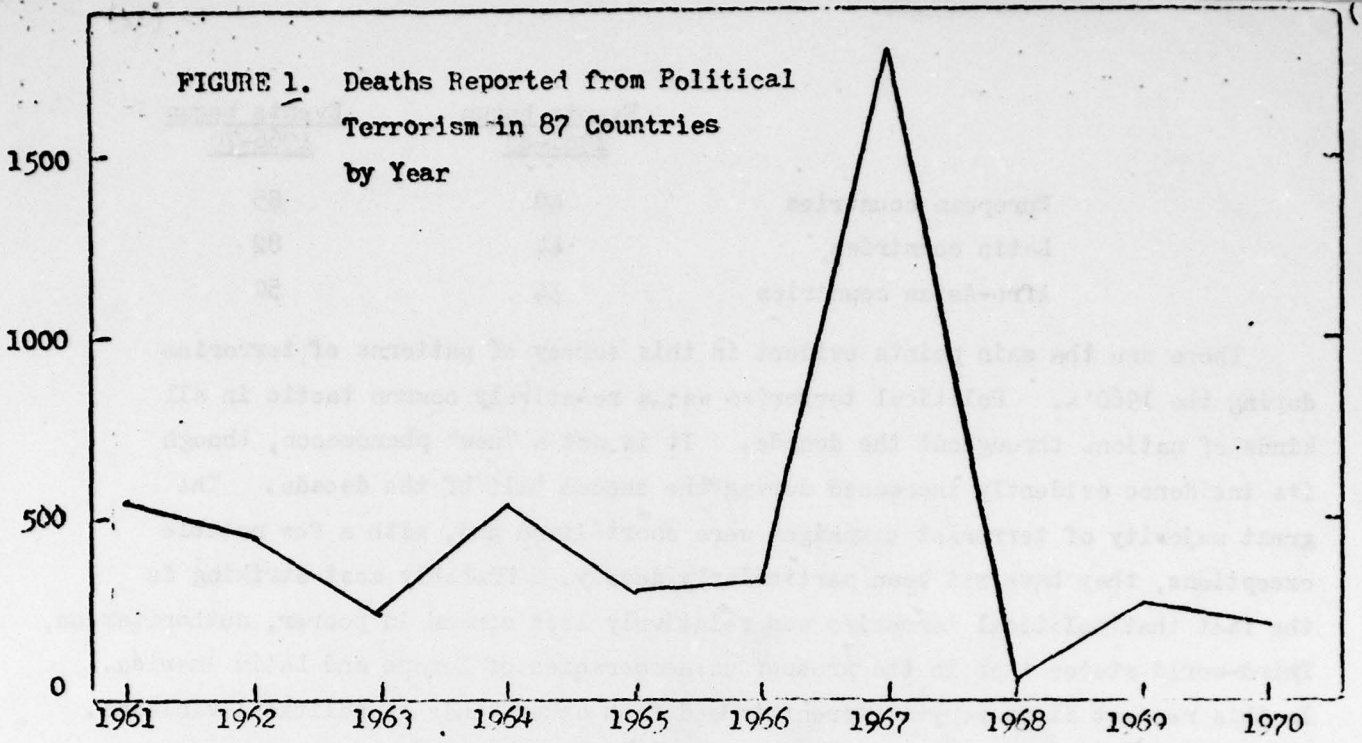
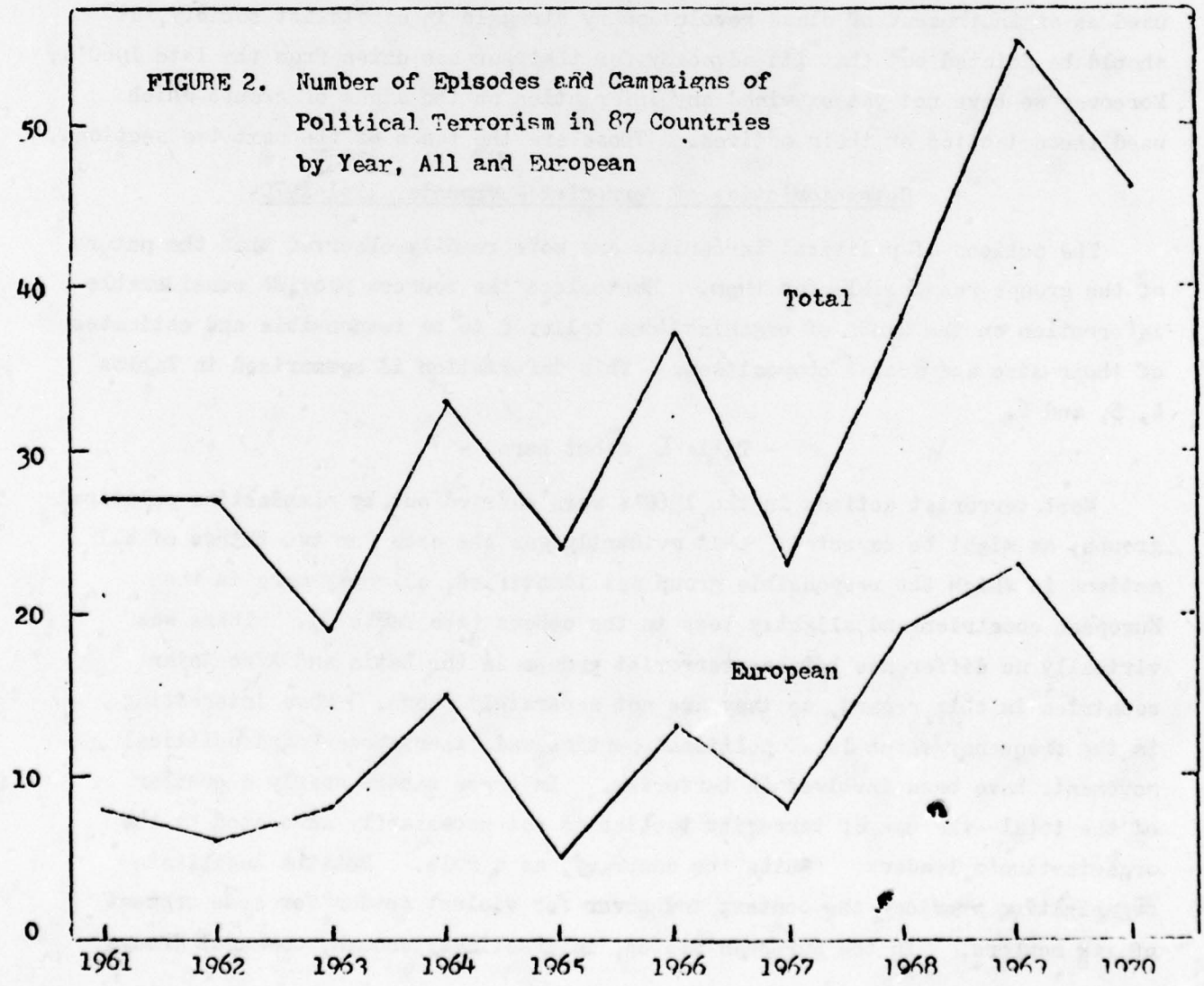


FIGURE 2. Number of Episodes and Campaigns of Political Terrorism in 87 Countries by Year, All and European



	Events begun 1961-65	Events begun 1966-70
European countries	40	85
Latin countries	44	82
Afro-Asian countries	34	50

These are the main points evident in this survey of patterns of terrorism during the 1960's. Political terrorism was a relatively common tactic in all kinds of nations throughout the decade. It is not a "new" phenomenon, though its incidence evidently increased during the second half of the decade. The great majority of terrorist campaigns were short-lived and, with a few notable exceptions, they have not been particularly deadly. Probably most striking is the fact that political terrorism was relatively less common in poorer, authoritarian, Third-world states than in the prosperous democracies of Europe and Latin America. In this respect it is very different indeed from other kinds of political violence. Lest the reader jump to the conclusion that political terrorism was being widely used as an instrument of class revolutionary struggle in capitalist society, it should be pointed out that its advocacy for that purpose dates from the late 1960's. Moreover we have not yet examined any information on the kinds of groups which used these tactics or their motives. Those are the tasks of the next two sections.

Characteristics of Terrorist Movements, 1961-1970

The actions of political terrorists are more readily observed than the nature of the groups responsible for them. Nontheless the sources provide considerable information on the kinds of organizations believed to be responsible and estimates of their size and social composition. This information is summarized in Tables 4, 5, and 6.

- Table 4 about here -

Most terrorist actions in the 1960's were carried out by clandestine political groups, as might be expected: this evidently was the case for two-thirds of all actions in which the responsible group was identified, slightly more in the European countries and slightly less in the others (see Table 4). There was virtually no difference between terrorist groups in the Latin and Afro-Asian countries in this regard, so they are not separately shown. More interesting is the frequency with which legal political parties and other above-board political movements have been involved in terrorism. In these cases--nearly a quarter of the total--the use of terrorist tactics is not necessarily advocated by the organization's leaders. Quite the contrary, as a rule. But the legitimate organization provides the context and cover for violent action for some segment of its members. In the European states, interestingly enough, communal groups

Table 4. Group Context for Terrorist Actions, 1961-1970[a]

Type of Group	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns: All (in 87 countries)	European (30)	Other (57)
Total no. of cases[b]	245	108	137
Clandestine political groups	66%	69%	64%
Conventional political groups	23	13	31
Communal groups[c]	9	17	3
Other groups[d]	2	2	2

a. Derived from coded information on the nature of groups said to be responsible for the events tabulated in Table 1. The data have been adjusted in two ways. First, 16 large-scale terrorist campaigns are excluded from these comparisons; second, campaigns which lasted longer than one year are counted separately for each year that they were in progress. The maximum number of cases, after these adjustments, is 336.

b. This information could not be ascertained for 91 of 336 terrorist episodes and campaigns. Groups responsible for the larger and more persistent campaigns are over-represented here.

c. Groups based on a particular regional, linguistic, ethnic, or religious segment of a national population.

d. Including economic associations and military groups carrying out extra-legal terrorist actions.

are frequently implicated in terrorist activities--a category that includes racial terrorism in ethnically-diverse states countries like the United States and the terrorist campaigns of regional separatists, for example in Canada, the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Italy, and Switzerland. Note how rarely communal groups were responsible for political terrorism in the Third World; separatist sentiments in Africa and Asia were more likely to inspire civil wars than terrorist campaigns.

It is easier to identify the organizations responsible for terrorist campaigns than it is to assess the class composition of their membership. In a third of the cases some estimate could be made, sometimes on the basis of general information (Peronist terrorist groups, for example, are predominantly working-class), sometimes from specific information available to the press or police. This information, summarised in Table 5, over-represents the larger and more publicity-conscious groups. About half these groups draw their members and leaders predominantly from a single class, more often from the working class than any other. Many of the "middle class" groups are comprised mainly of students, who also are the "middle-class" element in a number of the lower and middle class alliances. There are no marked differences among the regional groups of countries. An instructive comparison can be made between the class composition of these groups and those of larger revolutionary groups. Whereas only half the terrorist groups involve cross-class alliances, virtually all large-scale revolutionary groups on which we have comparable information draw substantially from two or more classes, very often including disaffected members of the military and the civilian political elite.[14] On this limited evidence, political terrorism appears to be a tactic of political activists who lack the broad class support needed for large-scale revolutionary activity.

- Tables 5 and 6 about here -

There is rarely any precise basis for estimating the number of members in terrorist groups. Even the concept of membership is ambiguous, since many groups rely on non-combatant supporters and intermittently-active sympathizers. Such information as is available about groups responsible for limited campaigns suggests that the hard-core activists are very few indeed, say between 5 and 25. The "Angry Brigade," which was responsible for a dramatic series of bombings in London from 1968 to 1971, was put out of action by the arrest of eight members and the conviction of four of them. Massive car bombings in London in March 1973, inspired by events in Northern Ireland, were laid to a group of 10, all arrested and convicted.[15] In each instance there may have been more activists than were caught, and many supporters for whom there were no grounds for arrest, but the point stands that when terrorist groups <u>are</u> broken by the police they usually prove

Table 5. Principal Socioeconomic Classes Represented in Groups Responsible for Terrorist Actions, 1961-1970[a]

Classes	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns in which Represented: All (in 87 countries)	European (30)	Other (57)
Total no. of cases[b]	112	51	61
Lower class only	30%	25%	33%
Middle class only	15	18	13
Lower and middle classes	40	39	41
Regime class only[c]	7	4	10
Regime class and others[c]	8	14	3

a. See Table 4, note a.

b. This information could not be ascertained for 224 of the 336 episodes and campaigns. Groups responsible for the larger and more persistent campaigns are over-represented here.

c. Regime classes include members of the political elite and disaffected military and police personnel.

Table 6. Estimated Membership of Groups Using Terrorist Tactics, 1961-1970[a]

Estimated membership	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns All (in 87 countries)	European (30)	Latin (22)	Afro-Asian (35)
Total no. of cases	335	125	126	84
Less than 50	86%	81%	91%	86%
50 - 500	8	10	7	5
more than 500	6	9	2	9

a. From coded information on the episodes and campaigns tabulated in Table 1. For single episodes, membership in the groups responsible usually can only be guessed at, and most of the "less than 50" estimates are of this sort. Membership in groups carrying out the larger campaigns is more often suggested in the sources, though

to have few members. Such information seldom is known for small groups. Estimates for larger terrorist groups are more readily available, from the police, political experts, and far from least the groups themselves. These kinds of estimates are obviously unreliable, but on the grounds that some estimate is better than none, Table 6 summarizes the coded information. For the small groups it usually involves forced judgments (i.e, guesses) that the groups were quite small. The estimates for larger groups are mainly from the journalistic sources. If anything the estimates probably over-state the size of terrorist groups. Only 21 groups are supposed to have had more than 500 members, and eleven of them were in the European countries. Muslim terrorists operating in France in 1961-62 are one example, student revolutionaries and racial terrorists in the United States are others, the Provisional IRA is yet another.

The Objectives of Political Terrorism, 1961-1970

There is not much ambiguity about the kinds of people and places that are the immediate objects of terrorist attacks. In the larger campaigns a variety of targets are often chosen: public buildings and private businesses, public figures and the police, political rivals and people chosen at random. Coded information on terrorists' targets in 1961-70 is shown in Table 7, about which a note of clarification may be needed. The three general categories shown, --property, public persons, and private persons--are not mutually exclusive; a group which hit targets of each type is counted under each heading. Within each general heading, though, the categories <u>are</u> mutually exclusive.

- Tables 7 and 8 about here -

Places are more often chosen as targets than public persons, though when a government building is bombed the act can be assumed to convey a message to someone. The preference for property targets was particularly pronounced in the European countries; in Afro-Asian countries terrorists were less solicitious about human life, as was evident from the data on deaths. In Latin countries, places and people were about equally likely to be chosen as targets. Whereas nearly all terrorist episodes and campaigns included some public targets, whether people or places, a quite substantial proportion of terrorist action was also aimed at private persons (and property, not shown separately). Private targets were particularly in favor among European terrorists, about a third of whom attacked private groups--mostly political or communal ones.

The people who are the most likely targets of terrorist action are leading politicians and officials, with the military and police coming in second.

Table 7. Principal Targets of Terrorist Action, 1961-1970[a]

Type of Targets	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns			
	All (in 87 countries)	European (39)	Latin (22)	Afro-Asian (35)
Total no. of cases[b]	319	117	125	77
Property Targets	67%	86%	65%	43%
Domestic only	45	76	31	19
Foreign only	16	9	19	21
Foreign and domestic	6	1	14	3
Public Persons and Groups	53	36	57	71
Domestic political figures only	20	11	18	38
Military or police only	11	13	14	4
Various public persons, groups	13	9	13	22
Foreign political figures, groups	10	4	15	9
Private Persons and Groups	24	35	17	18
Private political groups only	6	10	4	3
Random victims only	8	4	10	12
Other and various	10	20	2	4

a. From coded information on the targets of terrorist attacks; see Table 4, note a. Italicized percentages add to more than 100, because terrorists often take action against several different kinds of targets.

b. This information could not be ascertained for 17 of 336 terrorist episodes.

Table 8. The Identity of Casualties in Episodes and Campaigns of Political Terrorism, 1961-1970[a]

Casualties	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns			
	All (in 87 Countries)	European (30)	Latin (32)	Afro-Asian (35)
Total no. of cases[b]	298	109	118	72
No casualties reported	37%	47%	42%	24%
Non-combatants	54	45	52	69
Military or police	14	13	12	18
Terrorists	14	11	15	17

a. From coded information on the identify of persons killed or injured in episodes and campaigns of terrorism; see Table 4, note a. Percentages add to more than 100 because in many instances casualties were suffered by several of the groups listed.

b. This information could not be ascertained for 38 of 336 terrorist episodes and campaigns.

These two groups were attacked in roughly 40 percent of terrorist episodes and campaigns, compared with victims chosen apparantly at random in only 8 percent of cases. (The category "various public persons, groups" refers in most instances to campaigns in which both officials and security personnel were attacked.) Random terrorism has gained a great deal of notoreity; it is evident from these data that in the 1960's it was uncommon, and in European countries very rare indeed. It was somewhat more characteristic of terrorist action in Third-World countries, but nowhere was it the prevailing tactic.

Since people are among the targets of perhaps two-thirds of all terrorist episodes and campaigns, it is worth asking what proportion of cases do in fact cause death or injury, and to whom. The coded information compiled in Table 8 shows that in over a third of all episodes and campaigns, and nearly half the European ones, no one was reported to have been either killed or injured. When casualties did occur, they were principally among "non-combatants," which is to say the political and private, national and foreign persons categorized in Table 7. Security forces and the terrorists suffered casualties in only a small fraction of cases--1/4 percent in each instance. As has been seen from other indicators, terrorism in European countries was likely to be less risky for all concerned than elsewhere. One object lesson to be drawn from these data is that political terrorism has been a relatively low-risk tactic for those who use it. Rioting and guerrilla warfare--two alternative forms of violent political action--can be shown to cause disproportionately large numbers of casualties among rioters and guerrillas by comparison with either the security forces or, usually, non-combatants.[16]

Though the targets of terrorists are unambiguous, their purposes are not always so clear. For larger groups, the "propaganda of the deed" is usually accompanied by outspoken claims and demands. Smaller groups may issue manifestos and give interviews as well, but some are content to let their actions speak for themselves. In about four-fifths of all instances, objectives were attributed to the perpetrators in the sources or could be inferred from the nature of the action. The coded data are summarized in Table 9. Political objectives of some kind are present almost by definition; the exceptions, all European ones, are terrorist actions aimed at political targets with social or economic purposes in mind. The most striking feature of the data is the rarity of "revolutionary" motives for terrorist action. Only 8 percent of all episodes and campaigns had as an explicit, primary objective the seizure of power or the advancement of a particular revolutionary ideology. To this should be added many of the 1/4 percent of cases categorized as having "several of the above (political) motives," and some of those said to have "diffuse political purposes." Even by this generous interpretation of the data, though, no more than about a quarter of all terrorist

Table 9. The Reported Purposes of Episodes and Campaigns of Political Terrorism, 1961-1970[a]

Purposes	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns			
	All (in 87 countries)	European (30)	Latin (22)	Afro-Asian (35)
Total no. of cases[b]	270	106	95	69
Political Purposes	97%	93%	100%	100%
Seize power	5	5	1	12
Oppose specific political policies and actions	17	24	16	10
Oppose specific public figures	13	7	18	17
Oppose private political groups or figures	6	9	3	3
Oppose foreign governments' policies, personnel	13	7	16	17
Several of the above	14	15	9	17
Diffuse political purposes	30	27	37	23
Economic Purposes[d]	11%	13%	7%	13%
Social Purposes	27%	46%	12%	20%
Promote an ideology	3	2	3	3
Protect interests of a social group[e]	13	26	2	7
Other and diffuse social purposes	12	18	6	10

a. From coded information on the objectives attributed to the groups responsible for terrorist episodes and campaigns; see Table 4, note a. The objectives are those claimed by the groups themselves, if reported, or if not, those attributed to them in the sources.

b. This information could not be ascertained for 66 of the 336 episodes and campaigns.

c. Instances in which political motives of indeterminant kind could be inferred from the pattern of action.

d. Specific economic purposes, not shown separately, include seizure of goods, changes in the distribution of wealth, and retaliation against business and labor organizations.

e. Including regional, ethnic, and communal groups but not social classes.

episodes and campaigns had "revolutionary intent," compared with 30 percent that were explicitly focused on particular public figures and policies, and another 19 percent whose purpose was to do harm to private political groups or foreigners.

On a global basis, ther, we can conclude that political terrorism in the 1960's was at least twice as likely to have limited objectives of the kinds expressed in conventional politics and political demonstrations as they were to have "revolutionary" objectives. None of the regional groups of nations deviate markedly from this pattern, except that the seizure of power is distinctly more common an objective among Afro-Asian terrorists than those elsewhere. The European terrorist groups conformed to the general pattern, with one notable exception. "Social" motives were considerably more common there than elsewhere; this is another manifestation of the prevalence of separatist and communal bases and objectives of a number of European and North American terrorists in the 1960's.

International Aspects of Political Terrorism

It is widely believed, on the basis of some well-publicized instances, that there are networks of support and communication among terrorist groups, and that many receive material support from foreign governments. The data for 1961-70 show that only 19 of 335 terrorist groups were reliably reported to have gotten material support, training, or safe bases from which to operate outside the country in which they were active. Of these 19, there were five each in the European and Latin countries and nine in Afro-Asian countries. Twice as many more may have received such support, on the strength of government allegations or indirect evidence given in the sources. Neither of these figures takes account of financial assistance or ideological encouragement, which might add significantly to the percentages shown in Table 10.

Terrorist groups in the 1960's were much more likely to direct their attacks at foreign targets than they were to receive foreign support. Information on this point was incorporated in Tables 7 and 9 and is summarized in Table 10. Altogether, just over a quarter of all terrorist episodes and campaigns had some anti-foreign elements, in purpose or target or both. But only about half of these--13 percent of the total--were primarily or exclusively anti-foreign.

- Table 10 about here -

Marighella advocated that terrorist campaigns be directed against the representatives of foreign imperialism, and that injunction evidently was especially influential in Latin countries. A third of Latin terrorist groups included foreign (mainly North American) property among their targets, 15 percent targeted foreign officials and businessmen. All told, 40 percent of terrorist events in the Latin

Table 10. Transnational Elements in Political Terrorism, 1961-1970

	Percentage of Episodes and Campaigns			
	All (in 87 countries)	European (30)	Latin (22)	Afro-Asian (35)
Total no. of cases	335	125	126	84
External support for terrorists[a]				
Specific foreign support	6%	4%	4%	11%
Suspected foreign support	12	9	3	29
Foreign objects of terrorist attack[b]	27	13	40	27
Total cases with external support or objects[c]	40	24	44	58

a. "Specific" foreign support refers to episodes and campaigns in which the terrorist group was reliably reported to have been provided an asylum, operating base, supplies, training, or military advisors by one or more foreign countries. "Suspected" foreign support refers to instances in which some kind of foreign support or encouragement was alleged or implied to have been provided in the sources, but without specific evidence being cited. Many of the latter are very dubious.

b. Cases in which any anti-foreign purposes or foreign targets were identified; from the data summarized in Tables 7 and 9.

c. Less than the sum of the figures above because cases with both external support and foreign targets are counted once only.

countries had a significant anti-foreign element. Moreover there was a substantial increase in the number that did so, from 18 in the first half of the decade to 32 in the second half. The comparable figures for the Afro-Asian countries are lower, though they too increase sharply in the second half of the decade. European terrorists were least likely of all to attack foreign targets, despite an apparent increase in attacks on targets associated with the United States in the late 1960's.

On the objective evidence, then, there was a very significant transnational element in political terrorism, even in the 1960's, and since then it appears to have increased rather than decreased. But it could not be argued that most or many terrorists have been the Trojan horses of foreign subversion, except possibly in the ideological sense. The more common manifestations of their "internationalism" are xenophobic attacks on foreign political presence and economic penetration.

Some Conclusions on the Conditions and Consequences of Political Terrorism

Few countries have been free of episodes of political terrorism. On the evidence reviewed here, the tactics so labeled have been a persistent feature of political life in a significant number of countries, and an occasional one in most others. We have also seen that in a number of respects the evidence of the 1960's contradicts some common views about the nature of political terrorism. Most campaigns were very brief, involved very few activists, and caused more noise than injury. In European countries the principal targets were property and casualties were uncommon.

The "revolutionary" dimensions of political terrorism also proved to have been a good deal less significant than common belief would have it. In fact, political terrorists are readily distinguishable from revolutionary and secessionist movements in a number of respects. They are much smaller in number than were the armies and cadres of, say, the Algerian or Angolan nationalists, or the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam, or the secessionists of the Southern Sudan or Northern Iraq, or even Fidel Castro's guerrilla bands in 1958. Not only did they lack the manpower, most of them also lacked the broadly-based class alliances and support that are characteristic of most revolutionary movements. Most striking of all, less than a quarter of them had explicit revolutionary objectives.

Even if it is argued that many terrorist movements have had covert revolutionary aims, they have been singularly unsuccessful in achieving them. Only a handful of the 335 episodes and campaigns reviewed here appear to have had any lasting effects on national political systems at any time between 1961 and 1976. Terrorism by Algerian Muslims in France during the Algerian War may have contributed to the war-weariness that led to a negotiated settlement; terrorism by the OAS in Algeria certainly did not keep Algeria French, but made it all the more imperative

for the colons to leave after independence. Terrorism in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, shortly before independence was a factional fight between nationalist parties jockeying for power and did not measurably affect the time-table for independence. In Latin America, the activities of Peronist terrorists helped pave the way for the return of Peron in 1972, the consequences of which were so anti-revolutionary that they stimulated still more terrorism. In Uruguay the Tupamaros pushed what had been a relatively open, democratic government into dictatorial repression, a condition whose theoretically-revolutionary consequences in the long run will have to be weighed against the present certainty of the elimination of both the revolutionaries and political freedom. In Brazil a decade of urban guerrilla activity has not shaken the military government's grip on power, nor had any visible effect on Brazil's economic boom.

Only in European countries can one find instances in this period of favorable political changes which might be attributed to terrorist activity. In the Alto Adige region of northern Italy, the German-speaking population gained a greater measure of autonomy in the late 1960's after a period of terrorist activity. A terrorist campaign in Quebec in the 1960's coincided with a federal policy of devolution which markedly increased the autonomy of all the provinces. But in both these cases there was intensive political activity and pressure of a more conventional sort in the same direction, and to attribute to the terrorists a major role in the outcome is romantic. In Northern Ireland, though, it is evident that the IRA can claim some of the credit for the British government's decision to suspend the Stormont Parliament and assume direct rule. Whether that will prove to have been a gain in the long run is another matter, but at least it was a change in a political situation that had been frozen for 50 years.

The upshot of this quick sketch is that in perhaps half-a-dozen instances in the last 15 years, in the 87 countries being considered, terrorism has been associated with structural changes that might conceivably be said to advance the cause advocated by the terrorists. Some of these changes have been reformist, some reactionary, none "revolutionary." On the basis of the record to date, the revolutionary potential of political terrorism is vastly over-rated. Where it has had any impact at all, other powerful political forces were pushing in the same direction.

Despite the lack of revolutionary success, the political use of terrorism flourishes, particularly in the more prosperous democracies. Terrorist campaigns are not so common, nor as enduring, in the new nations, and they are quite uncommon in authoritarian nations, both left and right. The evidence is not consistent with the view that political terrorism is a specific response to repressive government. In some cases, like South Africa and Spain, it is a response to

repression, but where it thrives is in the kinds of political systems which have a track record of accomodating diverse political views and demands. No doubt that is one explanation for the commonality and persistence of political terrorism in Western and Latin democracies: terrorists can act with more impunity in quasi-open societies than in police states.

The next question is why some people chose terrorist tactics rather than the more conventional methods of political participation and protest. The militants' most likely answer is that conventional tactics don't work. What the militants are less likely to acknowledge is that they did not or thought they could not muster enough popular support to play effective electoral or pressure politics. Political terrorism in democratic societies, and some others as well, is principally the tactic of groups which represent the interests and demands of small minorities. Revolutionaries in Western countries have adopted terroristic tactics because they are revolutionaries in societies where the great majority of the population finds the status quo tolerable. In the poorer and weaker nations of the Third world, discontent is sufficiently widespread that revolutionaries have much more promising material with which to work than high explosives.

The use of terrorism for non-revolutionary purposes in democratic societies is equally explicable in these terms. It is a dramatic way of calling attention to demands and interests of any sort which cannot get a hearing by conventional methods. The existence of mass media operating without government controls, and an attentive public, virtually guarantee that a dramatic act of terrorism will bring attention to the group's demands. Terrorism is a cheap and easy way of doing so, and one that carries relatively little risk. Whether it will gain them more than attention is another matter; for groups which are otherwise impotent, calling attention to their cause probably is a gain.

Anonymous acts of terrorism cannot so readily be explained in these terms, and they are relatively numerous : the fact that nearly a third of our cases of terrorism were coded as having "diffuse political purposes" is an index of their frequency. There are three kinds of explanations, each of which applies to at least some such acts. Some are manifestations of factional political squabbles--especially true in Italy and Argentina, for example--in which, from the point of view of the target groups, the medium is a message which needs no further translation. Others are tokens of some militants' millenarian faith that violent propaganda undermines the legitimacy of corrupt rulers. And some, probably including many non-political acts of terrorism, reflect a "bombing for the hell of it" mentality that finds sufficient satisfaction in the act itself.

This interpretation can be brought to a tentative conclusion by saying that political terrorism is almost always a tactic of the weak. In authoritarian political systems it is a dangerous tactic for the users and easily suppressed. In more open

and prosperous societies it has flourished, partly of course by imitation, but mainly because conditions are so favorable to it. First, there are increasing numbers of small groups in complex Western societies who are resentful at getting short shrift in the political and administrative process. This is not the place to ask whether their resentement has subjective or objective roots; its existence is evident enough. Second, the means for terrorist action are ready to hand for those alienated enough to choose them; guns and explosives are readily obtainable, targets are accessible. The attention of the media is usually assured. Far from least important, security measures are sufficiently uncertain that the terrorists are very likely to get away with it.

There is not much more to be said about terrorists who have "non-negotiable demands" which are beyond the capacity of political agents to satisfy. They will be treated as security problems, neither more nor less. But something more can be said about political terrorists who have specific, negotiable demands. Once they have the public attention they can use it, as have the Palestinians at the international level. In some countries political terrorism may evolve into a specific bargaining tactic, a mechanism of regular influence for groups which have no other effective leverage on the centers of power. There is a precedent of sorts, in the development of the strike as a technique of labor protest. In the industrializing societies of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, labor orgarizations and strikes were regarded with something like the fear and hatred which political terrorism inspires in contemporary societies. They too were treated as a security problem until they reached such proportions that accomodation to labor demands became an economic imperative. The reader may recoil from the implication that terrorists' demands might have the same status of workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, and strike. The point is that standards of what is a legitimate grievance, and what is a legitimate way to express it, change. It is not likely but conceivable that some kinds of political terrorism will eventually become a functional equivalent, in the political arena, of strike activity in the economic sphere: a recognized, perhaps even ritualized means by which groups exert political influence when the now-conventional methods of democratic political participation prove inadequate.

1. The data used in this study were collected under the supervision of the author and two principal research assistants, Charles Ruttenberg and Jean Dosé. The research was supported by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) of the Department of Defense (1965-1967) and subsequently by the National Science Foundation. Robin Gillies carried out the statistical analyses. The paper was written while the author was on research leave at the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, with fellowship support from the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

2. The most influential contemporary tract on political terrorism was written in 196 by the Brazilian revolutionary Carlos Marighella, published in a number of languages and in English as the Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla. It is much more a detailed prescription of tactics than an ideological or strategic analysis. A survey of contemporary revolutionary theories, some of them concerned with the rationale and tactics of terrorism, is Milos Martic, Insurrection: Five Schools of Revolutionary Thought (New York: Dunellen, 1975).

3. For a more general discussion of the concept of political terrorism see Paul Wilkinson, Political Terrorism (New York: John Wiley, a Halsted Press book, 1975).

4. The New York Times was the principal source, supplemented by information from regional news sources and, in some instances, the scholarly literature. A description of procedures and an analysis of the data on all recorded instances of civil strife in 114 countries for 1961-65 is included in T. R. Gurr, "A Comparative Survey of Civil Strife," in Hugh Davis Graham and T. R. Gurr, eds., Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives, a report prepared for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (New York: Praeger and Bantam Books, 1969). The data for the entire decade are analyzed in T. R. Gurr and Raymond Duvall, Conflict and Society: A Formal Theory and Some Contemporary Evidence, forthcoming, Part II. The coding sheet, coding guidelines, and the full data set for 1961-1970 are available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The coding sheet, which shows the categories used in this study and others, is also reproduced in T. R. Gurr, Politimetrics: An Introduction to Quantitative Macropolitics (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice-Hall, 1972).

5. For a technical criticism see Charles F. Doran et al., "A Test of Cross-National Event Reliability," International Studies Quarterly, 17 (June 1973), 175-203. A conceptual critique is included in T. R. Gurr, "The Neo-Alexandrians: A Review Essay on Data Handbooks in Political Inquiry," American Political Science Review, 68 (March 1974), 243-252.

6. The events classified as bombings and assassinations in the strife data set are treated in this study as "episodes," though some instances refer to series of such acts. The events classified as small-scale terrorism and large-scale terrorism are treated here as "campaigns." The definitional distinction used to distinguish bomb-

ings and assassinations from terrorist campaigns in the coding instructions was that the latter involved the use of a variety of methods of attack.

7. Wilkinson, op. cit.

8. E.V. Walters, Political Terrorism

9. Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1974 (London: HMSO, 1975), 20-21.

10. Associated Press item in the Chicago Sun-Times, September 7, 1975.

11. From a paper in the author's possession entitled "Urban Terrorism," no author or date but ca. 1972. The survey was conducted by the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms Division of the IRS and covered the period from January 1, 1969, through April 15, 1970. A follow-up study by the Conference Board for 1972 is described in the New York Times, October 8, 1973, 53f.

12. The most comprehensive and systematic collection of data on internal conflict, consisting of counts of "events" and conflict deaths for the years 1948 to 1967, is in Charles L. Taylor and Michael C. Hudson, World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972). But this is not a continuing effort and their data do not separately distinguish instances of terrorism. A narrative survey of terrorist activity as reported in the world press from 1968 through 1974 is Lester A. Sobel, ed., Political Terrorism (New York: Facts on File, 1975).

13. From the 1961-70 civil strife data set described in note 4, above.

14. Ibid.,

15. Sobel, op. cit., 217; Report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the Year 1973 (London: HMSO, 1974), 14, 38.

16. From the 1961-70 civil strife data set described in note 4, above.